

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

Former Gas Manufacturing Plant
5th and Hill Streets
Champaign, Illinois
April 1990

1. Overview of the Community Relations Plan

This community relations plan identifies issues of community interest regarding the Phase II environmental investigation of a former gas manufacturing site at 5th and Hill Streets in Champaign, Illinois, and outlines community relations activities to be conducted in preparation for and during Phase II.

An effective community relations program for this site will involve open, responsive and consistent communication with interested citizens, especially neighbors of the site, and with government officials. Elements include explaining the results of the Phase I environmental assessment and how Phase II will be conducted; assuring citizens that there is no immediate threat to their health; soliciting and providing responses to concerns; and explaining the results of the Phase II remedial investigation.

The community relations plan is a result of interviews with people who live and work in the neighborhood surrounding the site, community leaders, government officials and representatives of environmental organizations in the Champaign-Urbana area.

2. Capsule Site Description

The site of the former manufactured gas plant is at 502 W. Hill Street, at its intersection with 5th Street, in Champaign, Illinois. The 2.6 acre site is bounded on the north by the Norfolk and Western Railroad, on the east by 6th Street, on the south by residences fronting on Church Street and on the west by 5th Street. The site is in a residential neighborhood on the north side of Champaign, with a couple of small businesses, churches and Covenant Medical Center also within a two-block area around the site.

A search of historical records indicates that gas for heating and lighting was manufactured from coal at the site as far back as 1897. In 1903 the utility company was acquired by Illinois Traction, a predecessor of Illinois Power Co. Production continued until the mid-1930s, and the facility was later used only for test runs and to meet peak demand until 1955. Between 1955 and 1960 all above ground structures except for one building were demolished.

The site was not used again until after the property was sold by Illinois Power Co. to American Legion Post #559 in 1979. The Legion converted the remaining building into a meeting hall. Illinois Power Co. is currently buying back the property and assisting the Legion in finding a new meeting hall.

In February 1990, some parking lot improvement work at the site resulted in the uncovering of the residues of coal gas production that are under the surface. Illinois Power Co. secured the site by providing gravel for the parking lot and clean fill dirt for other graded areas and installing additional fencing around the parking lot and around the perimeter of the site.

3. The Environmental Investigation

The Champaign site is one of several former manufactured gas facilities Illinois Power Co. is investigating with the concurrence of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The sites contain residues that could be a health concern, depending on the type of chemical compounds in the residues and potential exposure of humans.

In 1986, Illinois Power Co. completed an environmental assessment (Phase I) that included a search of historical records, review of information about soils, geology and water resources in the area, interviews with retired employees and a surface investigation at the site. Based on the assessment, tar and oil are present under the surface and tar, ash and cinders are mixed with soil on the surface of the site. Air monitoring did not indicate an air quality problem.

Illinois Power Co. has hired John Mathes & Associates, Inc. of Columbia, Illinois, to assist it in the continued investigation of the site. In March 1990, a soil gas survey was conducted to determine the extent of underground contamination of soil and shallow groundwater on the

property. A similar survey will be conducted in the area of the site in May 1990. The results will be used to design a Phase II investigation, which will include soil sampling from boreholes and groundwater sampling from monitoring wells that will be installed on the property and in the nearby area.

The Phase II investigation is expected to take several months. A report describing the findings will be available sometime in 1991. If necessary, a feasibility study will be performed to evaluate alternative corrective action measures.

4. Community Background

A. Community Profile

Champaign, population 58,391, together with the adjacent city of Urbana, population 35,978, form a community that is the location of the state's largest university and a community college. Champaign is in east central Illinois in the midst of a rich agricultural area. There are a few major industrial plants in the community. Residents primarily work for the university and in smaller businesses that provide services to the university population or that make the community a shopping center for the surrounding area. The community has a high level of environmental awareness, with several organizations devoted to environmental protection and preservation of natural areas.

The public water supply for Champaign residents is drawn from groundwater. A private company, Northern Illinois Water Corp., provides the water from two well fields. The backup well is located three-fourths of a mile from the former manufactured gas site. A small stream, Boneyard Creek, is located three-tenths of a mile west of the site.

B. Chronology of Community Involvement

Upon completion of the Phase I environmental assessment, Illinois Power Co. notified American Legion Post #559 and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency that the site would be investigated further for the extent of below surface contamination. The company has been working with the American Legion Post to repurchase the property at 5th and Hill Streets and to find the Post a new headquarters

building before it begins the Phase II investigation. City staff and elected officials have also assisted the Legion during this period.

Illinois Power Co. held a briefing session for Urbana and Champaign officials, water company staff and the media immediately after it discovered the coal tar had been exposed during the February 1990 parking lot improvement project. Other government officials representing the area were also notified. Except for Legionnaires, people were largely unaware of the incident, because it occurred two days before a serious ice storm struck the community, completely occupying residents' time and interest for several days.

C. Community Concerns

Since 1987 when it became known that Illinois Power Co. intended to buy back the property, neighborhood residents have been concerned about future use of the site by the nearby hospital. Having only recently moved into the remodeled building at the site, Legion members have been reluctant to move. Community leaders want to make sure that the Legion is treated fairly during relocation and the purchase of the property.

Concern about possible health effects from the contamination at the site surfaced during neighborhood meetings in 1987 in regard to the movement of a house directly south of the site which is used as a women's emergency shelter. The news that Illinois Power Co. would begin the Phase II investigation a few months ahead of schedule has triggered additional concern about health effects from some residents and workers in the neighborhood.

Leaders of environmental organizations interviewed indicated they had little knowledge of the Champaign site, although some were aware that there have been some investigations at former gas manufacturing sites. They want to be kept informed of the investigation and findings.

From knowledge gained in interviews, it is likely that the following concerns will need to be addressed during the Phase II investigation:

- Airborne contamination from on-site activities. The workers at the site will be wearing protective equipment while drilling and soil borings are underway. Observers of the work may be alarmed about the potential for vapors to drift from the site and into the neighborhood.

- Contaminated water runoff from the site. Neighbors have inquired about past possible contamination of standing puddles of water after rain or snow. There may be concern about runoff into Boneyard Creek, which is less than half a mile away.
- Odors. Some odors were noticeable when the coal tar was exposed to the air during the grading project. Neighbors may be concerned that drilling will release similar odors. The odors may be seen as a nuisance, or they may increase concern about breathing harmful vapors.
- Contamination of the public water supply. There may be some concern about seepage of contamination into the public water supply well, three-quarters of a mile away from the site.
- Use of the site after Illinois Power Co. is through with its investigation. Concerns may center around not only possible remedial action and harm to the neighborhood, but also about sale of the property for a use that is not desired by the neighborhood.

5. The Community Relations Program

The community relations program for the former gas manufacturing site in Champaign will provide timely essential information about the investigation and its findings to nearby residents and their community leaders and other interested individuals and organizations in the area. The program is designed to monitor ongoing concerns and provide responses as needed. The community's leaders are a valuable resource in the community relations effort to understand and respond to concerns.

Program elements are:

- Identification through personal and telephone interviews of officials, community leaders and area residents and organizations that may have an interest in the investigation. This activity was conducted during February and March 1990.
- Provision of timely information to government officials, including city and county officials and state legislators. The Champaign Fire Department's Hazardous Materials Officer is receiving copies of technical documents relevant to the investigation, as is the manager

of the Northern Illinois Water Corp. A public notice list is attached to this plan.

- Provision of timely information to all interested persons. A mailing list of people who have asked to be kept informed will be maintained. Fact sheets will be produced for distribution to government officials, American Legion Post #559 officers, environmental organization representatives and other area residents at the beginning of the investigation and at the conclusion. A fact sheet will be given to neighbors of the site when Illinois Power Co. representatives contact them to seek access to property for soil gas testing in May 1990. Interim status reports will be issued if necessary during the Phase II investigation. Similar materials will be prepared during succeeding phases of work at the site.
- Providing the opportunity to interested persons for a personal response to their concerns. Illinois Power Co. representatives will appear before community groups if requested. A presentation is scheduled for the April 19, 1990 meeting of Concerned Citizens For A Better Neighborhood. The company will convene information meetings for area residents if monitoring of concerns indicates there is a need for additional contact. Meeting places that have been offered are:
 - Champaign Park District Douglass Center Annex, 804 N. 5th St.
 - Salem Baptist Church, 500 E. Park Ave.

To ensure that inquiries are handled efficiently and consistently, a single contact person will receive comments and requests for information from individuals in the community:

Gretchen Monti
Monti Communications, Inc.
P.O. Box 4189
Bloomington, IL 61702-4189
309/452-9151

- An information repository at the Champaign Public Library Douglass Branch, 310 E. Bradley Ave. and the main library, 505 S. Randolph St.. Fact sheets, technical documents, including the work plan and reports of findings, an Illinois Power Co. videotape and the community relations plan are being placed in the library.
- Placement of fact sheets with organizations in the area frequented by residents who live near the site. The Park District's Douglass Center

and Douglass Annex on E. Grove St., the Frances Nelson Health Center, 1306 Carver Dr., the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Office at 710 N. Neil St. and American Legion Post #559 (relocated) have been identified as possible places.

- News releases to local media. Releases announcing the commencement of the Phase II investigation, any status reports and findings at the conclusion will be sent to the media listed in the attached public notice list. They will also receive copies of the fact sheets.

Media relations will be handled by Jim McDonald, Illinois Power Co. Public Affairs in Decatur, 217/424-8316.